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Sandinistas Said to Surround Visiting Indians

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 24 — A Miskito Indian spokesman said today that a group of Indian leaders from the United States and Canada, on a secret trip inside Nicaragua with a Miskito leader, Brooklyn Rivera, had been encircled by Nicaraguan Government troops.

The Miskito spokesman, Armstrong Wiggins, said the purpose of the trip was to familiarize the foreign Indian leaders with conditions in the Miskito area and the attitudes of the people.

A Nicaraguan official in Washington said he had no information from his Government about the presence of Mr. Rivera's group but added that if it had entered the country illegally and was traveling with armed men, it would "have to suffer the consequences."

Although the Miskito spokesman said the delegation had not gone into Nicaragua to engage in combat, the Nicaraguan official, Manuel Cordero, deputy chief of the Nicaraguan Embassy, pointed out that one of the American Indians on the trip, Russell Means, had declared in Costa Rica on Nov. 10 that he hoped to recruit 90 to 100 "warriors from North America" to fight the Sandinistas.

Called Educational Trip

Steven Tullberg, the staff attorney for the Indian Law Resource Center, said of the trip: "It was part of an educational process. They wanted to go see for themselves what was going on in the villages."

Mr. Wiggins, an associate of the Indian Law Resource Center here, said the Sandinistas conducted bombing raids Wednesday around the village of Layasiksa in the Atlantic coast area where Mr. Rivera and his party were traveling. He said two civilians had died of wounds in the bombing.

Mr. Wiggins said Mr. Rivera, leader of the Miskito organization known as Misurasata, was accompanied by Mr. Means and Hank Adams, another American Indian activist; Clem Chartier of Canada, president of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, and several other people.

"They are safe, but they can be in danger at any moment," Mr. Wiggins said. "They could be wiped out and the Sandinistas would try to put the blame on the C.I.A. or the contras. There are no contras or C.I.A. in the area. I want to make that clear to the world. This is Indian territory."

Contras is the term widely used for combatants of the United States-backed Nicaraguan Democratic Force, the largest anti-Government guerrilla force.

Originally Support Sandinistas

The Miskito Indians supported the Sandinista Government after it came to power in 1979, but within a year sharp differences began to develop over Miskito desires for more autonomy and the Sandinista military buildup in the Miskito region, which covers the eastern two-thirds of Nicaragua. In 1981, many Miskitos began to flee to Honduras and Costa Rica and actively oppose the Sandinistas.

The Government responded by destroying many Miskito villages and moving large numbers of those who remained in Nicaragua into resettlement

campes. Last year, some of those who were resettled were allowed to return to their traditional homelands.

Mr. Tullberg said today that he and Mr. Rivera had begun contacting "friendly governments" to ask them to press the Nicaraguan Government to pull its troops back from the encirclement of the Indian group.

Mr. Wiggins said the Governments included those in the Netherlands, Sweden, France, Canada, Mexico and Colombia, all of which have been sponsors of an effort to achieve a negotiated settlement between Mr. Rivera's Indian group and the Sandinista Government. Another Miskito group cooperates with the Democratic Force.

The talks, which were distinct from the so-called Contadora peace negotiations for an overall Central American settlement, broke down last May. But Mr. Wiggins said that an unofficial truce, which began before the talks collapsed, had remained in effect in the Miskito region and that there had been very little combat until this week.

Called Violation of Promises

"This is a violation of the Sandinista promises to give rights to the Indians," Mr. Wiggins said. "It will threaten whatever peace is possible. It will kill the negotiations."

He said Mr. Rivera's group clandestinely crossed into the Miskito region of Nicaragua from Costa Rica about 20 days ago and had been moving quietly toward Honduras, talking to people in villages along the way.

Mr. Wiggins, who said Miskito representatives in Costa Rica were in frequent radio contact with those inside, said Sandinista officials apparently detected the presence of the group at the beginning of this week and began to increase the army presence in the region. He said a large number of troops disembarked along the coast and others were deployed some distance inland.

He said that he did not want to reveal the exact location of Mr. Rivera's party but that it was in the general area of Layasiksa, which is south of Puerto Cabezas, the major town in the Miskito region.

Fighters Joined Trip

He said that the Indian leaders had attracted a following of armed Misurasata fighters as they traveled but that they were there to protect the delegation, adding, "Misurasata doesn't want to precipitate combat."

Mr. Wiggins said that in the bombing raid Wednesday the Sandinistas had used a "Push-Pull" aircraft left from the days of the Somoza dictatorship and a single-engine warplane. He said people from the villages of Layasiksa and Haulover fled into the surrounding forest when the attack occurred and were still hiding there. He identified the dead as Florentin Conrado and Julio Serapio.

Mr. Means, a leader of the American Indian group that took over the Wounded Knee reservation in South Dakota in 1973, later served one year of a four-year prison sentence for his role in a clash between Indians and the police at the court house in Sioux Falls, S.D., in 1974. He lives in Rapid City, S.D.

Mr. Adams, who was a leader of the four-day occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs building in Washington by Indians in November 1972, is national director of the Survival of American Indians Association in Olympia, Wash. Mr. Chartier's group has its headquarters in Ottawa.